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SUBJECT: Romanian Elections: Basescu Widens Lead After Partial
Recount

REF: BUCHAREST 824 AND PREVIOS

¶1. (U) Summary. After a recount of all voided ballots, incumbent President Traian Basescu slightly widened his lead over Social Democrat (PSD) candidate Mircea Geoana by an additional 273 votes. On December 14 the electoral commission (BEC) submitted its report to the Constitutional Court, which is expected to validate the final result in the coming days. End Summary.

¶2. (U) The BEC finished December 14 its recount of the approximately 140,000 ballots that were declared invalid during the December 6 presidential runoff, a recount which the Constitutional Court had mandated December 11 following a complaint filed by Geoana and the PSD party. A total of 2,247 ballots were reinstated, of which 1,260 were cast for Basescu and 987 for Geoana. A BEC spokesman attributed the ultimately incorrect invalidation of these votes to the weariness of vote counters on a particularly long election night. The BEC submitted its report, including the revised final election results incorporating the recounted ballots, to the Constitutional Court for validation.

¶3. (U) In an interview over the weekend, Geoana said he would pursue fraud allegations all the way to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) if necessary. He stated that the PSD challenge to the Constitutional Court included five requests, only one of which was the recount of invalidated ballots. (Note: Neither PSD nor the court has revealed the contents of the written challenge. End Note.) The PSD is now calling for review of the signatures of voters' affidavits that they voted only once. Geoana claimed that he hoped to see the process completed by December 21, though he did not explain how this could be accomplished while appealing to the ECHR.

¶4. (U) Comment: The recount result came as no surprise. The nine-member Constitutional Court reportedly was split four to four last week over whether or not to validate the elections outright, with one abstention. The results of this latest recount will likely tip the balance in favor of validation, absent an unexpected revelation of proven systematic fraud. It is also worth noting that every day another senior PSD leader seems to abandon Geoana's campaign to overturn the election results. The Court is expected to rule within the next several days, and the present odds are in favor of validation of Basescu's victory. End Comment.

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